



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MORAL VALUES: A STUDY OF THE PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT. By Walter Goodnow Everett, Professor of Philosophy in Brown University. New York: Henry Holt and Company. Pp. xiii, 439.

We have here an idealistic theory of morality presented in attractive literary form, which will doubtless make an appeal to a wider public than the standard works of this kind have been able to reach. Like Paulsen's *System of Ethics*, with which this book shows many points of agreement, it discusses fundamental problems in a manner that does not put too severe a strain upon the mental processes of the general intelligent reader; like that popular manual also, it makes the subject living and real by connecting it with vital human interests. After all, ethics is nothing less than an obstinate attempt to interpret the moral life, to understand its claim on us; and since every educated human being is bound to reflect upon the meaning of it, sooner or later, ethics becomes a practical necessity to him. Professor Everett's volume will benefit those who feel this need and stimulate them to seek further help from works which go more deeply into the matter than can be expected from an introductory text.

Professor Everett has entitled his book "Moral Values," using as a sub-heading: "A Study of the Principles of Conduct." The idea of value is for him the basal conception of ethics; "no other term, such as duty, law, or right, is final for thought; each logically demands the idea of value as the foundation upon which it finally rests." Ethics attempts to unify the facts of conduct by means of the idea of value; it deals primarily with what is, and finds all its data in the moral experience of the race. "No ideal 'ought' can have any meaning, either in theory or in practice, separated from what actually exists. If by the study of the moral experiences of men all moral judgments can be reduced to universal principles, then such principles will be valid for all future conduct" (p. 17). This view would, perhaps, be satisfactory if ethics confined itself to a mere historical interpretation of morality, although in that case the values or principles underlying the codes of the past, present, and future would not necessarily be the same. To be sure, if, as Professor Everett tells us, the principles of morality which have guided, consciously or unconsciously, the moral struggles of the past are embodied in the codes with increasing perfection, then we may discover from history the

values which the race held high; and if it could be shown that these values are basal values, that their acceptance is an inevitable necessity of human nature, then our task as ethicists would be completed and our science would rest upon a solid foundation.

I am not certain, however, that this is Professor Everett's final judgment in the matter, for he also tells us that morality is progressive and that we may reach a higher level of value than has been attained thus far; the fact appears to be that the moral philosopher may be ahead of his time, sit in judgment upon the values of his age and find them wanting. The code changes, he says, as the conception of human welfare changes. The *standard* itself is progressive. "This standard recognizes that morality is strictly organic to the needs of developing life, but it does not mean that a standard is wanting at any stage of the process" (p. 327). Nevertheless, "to infer from the historical progress of morality that all codes are equally good, or that one may safely reject the conscience of one's own day and race, is a conclusion wholly without warrant." Our author makes the historical progress of civilization the court of last appeal between conflicting ideals and codes of morality. *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*. If this means that ideals triumph and are defeated in the course of history, we must sorrowfully agree; but are we prepared to say that the triumphant ideal is the true ethical ideal? Would the victory of the philosophy of might make it right? "Those ideals," says Professor Everett, "which in the light of the most adequate experience, fail to meet human needs will, we may hope, be slowly rejected" (p. 334).

Yes, but the ideal of humanity, kindness, and justice may fail to meet the needs of a people lusting for world-empire and be very quickly rejected. A people that rides roughshod over other peoples may live and thrive and be satisfied, and yet be bad. We cannot give up the evolutionary conception of morality: our ethical values are not static, they grow. But unless there is something constant in the development of our moral values, the study of the historical process will end in moral scepticism. Professor Everett evidently believes that there is such a constant element:

"If the sceptic finally asserts that his own nature is so unique as to require a moral regimen fundamentally different from that of his fellows, the fact of such a degree of uniqueness may be challenged" (p. 333). "The structure of man's nature, as con-

scious and spiritual, grounds laws just as real as those of physical life, and just as truly objective" (p. 332). (See also the passage on p. 259, quoted below.) Age "knows that it would be impossible to attain the goal of life in disregard of social factors and psychological laws that are universal."

If this is so, is it not reasonable to infer that the values which have come to consciousness in human history will not be lost but will be deepened and extended, and that *human reason* is the court of last appeal in judging these values? Our author answers this question in the affirmative when, in another connection, he declares: "There can be no doubt that the general verdict of mankind would always be against any so-called movement of progress, if it could be demonstrated that its ultimate and net result was a reduction in the amount of human happiness. . . . As an ideal, man will tolerate neither an unholy happiness nor an unhappy holiness. . . . Further, both happiness and perfection are constantly used as norms of judgment" (pp. 170 f). The assumption here is that although the moral codes may change, the ethical standard remains the same for reason, and that the verdict of history has no validity against the verdict of right reason.

Professor Everett's analysis of the value-experience does not seem to me to be adequate. One of its essential elements is said to be "the enjoyment of relatively permanent and widely diffused states of agreeable consciousness" that result from the fulfillment of existing desire. "Used in this latter sense, satisfaction is one of the best terms for the feeling of value, especially for popular use, since it is generally understood to mark those experiences of well-being that arise from the higher individual and social activities" (p. 121).

"At least one element which is essential to the very idea of value, positive or negative, is found in the affective states as agreeable or disagreeable" (p. 125). A being "without any capacity for experiencing feelings of pleasure or displeasure, but with the cognitive and volitional activities unimpaired," would find our vocabulary of approval and disapproval wholly unintelligible. "Somewhere, and at some time, all acts must find their value in an inner world of satisfaction, which is expressible psychologically in feelings of the pleasure-displeasure series" (p. 128). It is true that value-judgments or value-experiences are, like all experiences, accompanied by feelings of pleasure or displeasure; but

are these feelings merely the result of an existing desire? and what are the other elements essential to the idea of value? The worth-experience appears to be a unique attitude of mind which has its own vocabulary, not translatable into hedonistic terms. To feel a pleasure and to place a value upon a pleasure are not the same. I do not understand Professor Everett to reduce the value-experience to hedonistic terms, and I do not think it incumbent upon him to offer an exhaustive psychological analysis of the worth-attitude, but it would have been helpful if, having taken it up at all, he had gone into the subject somewhat more thoroughly. It is clear, however, that whatever the psychology of worth may be found to be, he conceives ethical evaluation as something intuitive:

"We have already pointed out that value, although describable in various ways as an immediate experience, is an ultimate term of ethical thought. And we hold that there is at least one intuitive, or immediate and axiomatic, judgment concerning it, which may be expressed as follows: 'The good is worthy to be chosen.' No proof of this proposition can be given; it can only be stated in other words, as when we say that we are so constituted as to prefer good to ill. It is not the business of ethics to ask why man's original nature is as it is. The *what* and the *how*, not the *why*, are here significant" (p. 259).

The book ends with a chapter on "Morality and Religion" in which the ethical values play the chief rôle. "The ideal of religion, which men are always seeking, must involve that interpretation of the world which is truest, and that adjustment of conduct which, in view of this interpretation, will yield to humanity the richest values" (p. 385). If we should become convinced that the world is, on the whole, bad instead of good, then the task of diminishing the misery of existence would constitute a religious attitude.

In other words, there may be a conflict between our ethical values and our metaphysical interpretation of the universe, in which case we hold fast to our values. "If we find that it is impossible to harmonize the meaning of human life with the world-order as a whole, we should then regard positive religion as the loyal effort to fulfill the spiritual destiny that has been assigned to man" (p. 387). "The central insight . . . which is vital for all religion and morality, is that the laws of spiritual life which hold within the kingdom of human values are no less valid because

they are not laws of the whole empire" (p. 419). The sufficient vindication of our ideals "lies in the fact that they enrich and ennoble man's life" (p. 419). "Even though our little planet, with all its life, were to become uninhabitable, or to be swept entirely out of existence, it would still be true that these ideals had been no fiction or illusion of the fleeting moment, but genuine realities organic to the whole of Being" (p. 420).

It is evident that faith in our ethical values constitutes the backbone of Professor Everett's religion. On this faith is based the belief in God and the belief that "the world process as a whole is worth while, that it contains more good than evil" (p. 421). And in the same faith is rooted the firm conviction that there can be no conflict between truth and our moral and religious ideals: "The deepest and most precious faith, the faith none can afford to lose, is the faith that to discover the truth about reality and to follow this truth loyally, will in the end lead to the highest good" (p. 420).

We have here a noble ethical religion, but I do not think that the individual *must* recognize, in case he finds it impossible to harmonize the meaning of human life with the world-order as a whole, as our author says he may, that "all that blossoms and grows" in "his own garden" is "watered by streams from the eternal hills and nourished by the all-pervading life" (p. 421). He will recognize it if he believes in an "all-pervading life" and in the organic relation of his ideals to the *whole* of Being, and if he is convinced that his ethical values are values which the all-pervading life will realize in spite of the crack of doom. He may hope that all this is true; but if he has genuine moral faith, he will hold fast to the good and go down fighting for it, believing that there was something worth while, after all, in the unfriendly universe while it lasted, something worth enduring even though it had been but a faint and passing glimmer in the eternal darkness. And this heroic ethical faith, I think, expresses the spirit of Professor Everett's thought. Many will refuse to give to it the name of religion; but it forms an essential part of advanced religions as well as of the world-views of materialists and agnostics.

FRANK THILLY.

Cornell University.